News Releases - 2007

Governor General's Awards in Visual and Media Arts Announcement of winners

Ottawa, March 20, 2007 – The Canada Council for the Arts today announced the names of the eight winners of the 2007 Governor General's Awards in Visual and Media Arts.

Ian Carr-Harris, Aganetha Dyck, R. Bruce Elder, Murray Favro, Fernand Leduc and Daphne Odjig will receive awards for artistic achievement; ceramist Paul Mathieu will receive the Saidye Bronfman Award for excellence in the fine crafts, while David P. Silcox will receive the outstanding contribution award for his work as a writer, educator, cultural administrator and arts volunteer.

The winners were announced at a news conference in Toronto by François Lachapelle, head of the Canada Council's Visual Arts section. They will be presented with their awards by Her Excellency the Right Honourable Michaëlle Jean, Governor General of Canada, at a ceremony at Rideau Hall on Friday, March 23 at 5:30 p.m. In addition to a $25,000 prize, the winners will be presented with original artworks created by New Brunswick ceramist and sculptor Peter Powning, winner of the 2006 Saidye Bronfman Award.

The Governor General's Awards in Visual and Media Arts, funded and administered by the Canada Council for the Arts, recognize distinguished career achievement in the visual and media arts by Canadian artists, as well as outstanding contributions to the visual and media arts through voluntarism, philanthropy, board governance, community outreach or professional activities. 2007 marks the eighth annual presentation of these prestigious awards. The Saidye Bronfman Award, which recognizes excellence in the fine crafts, is part of the Governor General's Awards for the first time this year; it is funded from the proceeds of a $1.5 million endowment given to the Canada Council by The Samuel and Saidye Bronfman Family Foundation in 2006.

"My husband Jean-Daniel Lafond and I congratulate the recipients who wholeheartedly broaden our horizons through the unique power of creation. You continuously open our eyes to everything that is beautiful in the world and we thank you for that," said the Governor General.

Canada Council Chair Karen Kain said this year's awards are especially significant for two reasons: the value of the awards has been increased from $15,000 to $25,000, and the Saidye Bronfman Award – Canada's highest honour for craft artists for the past 30 years – is now one of the Governor General's Awards in Visual and Media Arts. "We are delighted that we were able to make these enhancements to the awards during the Canada Council's 50th anniversary year," she said. "The creation of these awards in 1999 was a landmark event in the Canada Council's history, and they are now firmly established among the most prestigious

honours awarded to Canadian artists."

Images of the winners and their works can be downloaded from the online media kit.

Information about past winners is available on the awards site.

Biographical notes

Ian Carr-Harris

Ian Carr-Harris has been creating and exhibiting his art for over 30 years, including sculptures, site-specific installations and photography and more recently, illuminated books. He began his intellectual life studying history and library science; his artistic work first emerged in the 1970's with an exhibition at A Space, then Canada's pioneer artist-run centre. Since that time, he has continued to exhibit his work in Canada and internationally. Carr-Harris represented Canada at the 1984 Venice Biennale, at Documenta 8 in Kassel in 1987, and at the Sydney Biennale in 1990. He has paralleled his outstanding artistic achievements with a commitment to guiding new generations of artists; since 1975, he has taught sculpture and installation at the Ontario College of Art and Design. Carr-Harris has written extensively on the work of other artists, has served on the boards of art galleries and artist-run centres and has contributed to public policy in the arts as a member of the Metro Toronto Public Art Advisory Commission. The jury described him as "an important figure in contemporary art," whose work brings together "the ephemeral and the industrial." Ian Carr-Harris lives in Toronto.

Aganetha Dyck

Aganetha Dyck was born in Winnipeg and raised in a rural Manitoba community. Her sculptural installation and mixed media work is rooted in her Mennonite background, her interest in everyday objects and the notion of women's work. She began her career working in a range of sculptural media that included wool, cigarettes and buttons; since 1991, she has been best known for her collaborative work with live honeybees, making honeycombs and beeswax an integral part of her artistic creations. The jury described Dyck as a "remarkable artist" whose work shows "a great sense of humour and wit." The jury also noted her tremendous influence in the Manitoba visual art community: for 16 years, she has been involved in the Manitoba Arts Council's artists in the schools program, and has mentored nine emerging female artists in their transition into the professional art community. The Governor General's Award in Visual and Media Arts is her second major award this year: she was recently named the fifth recipient of the Manitoba Arts Council's annual Arts Award of Distinction. Aganetha Dyck lives in Winnipeg.

R. Bruce Elder

Bruce Elder is a filmmaker, critic and teacher of film studies at Ryerson University. Described by New York filmmaker and critic Jonas Mekas as "the most important North American avant-garde filmmaker to emerge during the 1980s," Elder combines images, music and text to create works that reflect his interest in philosophy, technology, science, spirituality and the human body. His first major film cycle (20 films), *The Book of All the Dead*, inspired by Dante Alighieri's *Commedia* and Ezra Pound's *Cantos*, grew out of his preoccupation with the horrors of modernity, its faith in progress and the loss of a sense of what is good and evil. His current film cycle, *The Book of Praise*, makes extensive use of computer-image generation, highlighting his fascination with mathematics and digital technology. Elder has been a guest lecturer at institutions across North America and around the world and has written books and articles on film, music, poetry and the visual arts. The jury described him as "highly innovative," "influential" and "acutely intelligent," noting the enormous span of his practice and the demanding nature of his films. Bruce Elder lives in Toronto.

Murray Favro

For more than 40 years, Murray Favro has been one of Canada's most distinctive and influential artists. His multi-disciplinary practice has yielded a significant body of work that includes including drawing, sculpture, performance and installation, often incorporating slide and film projections, lighting effects, computer and electronic technology. Born in Huntsville, Ontario, Favro moved to London as a teenager and is an important figure among a significant generation of artists – Jack Chambers, Greg Curnoe and Ron Martin among them – who became active in that city in the early 1960s and drew national attention as the London Regionalist School of artists. His work is represented in every major public collection in the country, and has been exhibited widely in Canada and abroad for the past five decades. Favro is also well known as a founding member of the Nihilist Spasm Band, which was crucial to the development of his artistic approach. The jury described Murray Favro as a "master of transformation" who has made an important mark on Canadian contemporary art. Murray Favro lives in London, Ontario.

Fernand Leduc

Abstract painter Fernand Leduc has been a major figure in Quebec's contemporary art scene for the past 50 years. In the 1940s, he played a major role in the formation of the group of dissident artists known as the Automatistes, which included such well-known artists as Jean-Paul Riopelle, Paul-Émile Borduas and Françoise Sullivan. In the mid-1950s, dividing his time between Montreal and Paris, he became the president and founding member of the *Association des artistes non-figuratifs* of Montreal. In more recent years, he focused on creating abstract landscapes, creating works featuring luminous fields of colour. His commitment to art was also evident in his writing and teaching. In 1988, he was awarded the Prix Paul-Émile Borduas, Quebec's highest honour in the visual arts. After spending a good part of his life in France

and Italy, he returned to Montreal in 2006. The jury described Fernand Leduc as a pioneer in contemporary Canadian painting, noting his "total commitment to abstraction."

Daphne Odjig

Daphne Odjig is one of Canada's most celebrated Aboriginal painters and printmakers. Born on Manitoulin Island's Wikwemikong reserve of Odawa, Pottawatomi and English heritage, she first learned about art-making from her grandfather, Jonas Odjig, a tombstone carver who taught her to draw and paint. She later moved to British Columbia. Odjig's style, which underwent several developments and adaptations from decade to decade, manages to always remain identifiable. Mixing traditional Aboriginal styles and imagery with Cubist and Surrealist influences, Odjig's work is defined by curving contours, strong outlining, overlapping shapes and an unsurpassed sense of colour. Her work has addressed issues of colonization, the displacement of Aboriginal peoples, and the status of Aboriginal women and children, bringing Aboriginal political issues to the forefront of contemporary art practices and theory. The jury described Daphne Odjig's work as "groundbreaking", noting her unique voice and her role as a "real champion" of Aboriginal artists. She currently lives in Penticton.

Paul Mathieu – Saidye Bronfman Award

Paul Mathieu is a major Canadian ceramist who also enjoys an international reputation. A seasoned artist, with some 20 solo exhibitions and several prestigious awards to his credit, his work is an investigation of the role of ceramics within culture in general and art in particular. Mathieu's work, which critiques the stereotypes that affect crafts, explores both the functional and decorative nature of ceramic art: he describes it as "handmade, very permanent, tactile, functional and based on direct physical experience in its making and its appreciation." Mathieu pursued this exploration of "decorativism" during a three-year residency at the Sanbao Ceramic Art Institute in Jingdezhen, the 1,000-year-old centre of Chinese ceramics. Mathieu is also a teacher and writer: he is currently an Associate Professor of Visual Arts at the Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design in Vancouver, and is the author of *Sex Pots: Eroticism in Ceramics*. The jury described Mathieu as "accomplished," a "risk-taker" and an artist whose work is based in innovation. A native of Bouchette, Quebec, Paul Mathieu lives in Vancouver.

David P. Silcox – Outstanding Contribution Award

David Silcox has had a distinguished and varied career as a writer, educator, cultural administrator and arts advocate. Currently the president of Sotheby's Canada, Silcox first emerged on the Canadian art scene at Hart House at the University of Toronto; in 1961, he helped organize the massive Canadian Conference of the Arts at Toronto's O'Keefe Centre; he also organized the first Toronto Outdoor Art Exhibition. In 1962, *The Globe and Mail* – where he later worked as art

critic – named him "Man of the Year in Art." In 1965, he joined the Canada Council as its first Arts Officer; over the next five years, he helped create a system of grants for artists and arts organizations. In 1970, he moved to York University to help shape the new Faculty of Fine Arts. Before joining Sotheby's, Silcox was the director of the University of Toronto Art Centre. He has served on the boards of numerous cultural organizations and has written several outstanding books on Canadian art and artists, including David Milne and the Group of Seven. He wrote a chapter in *Art at Work/Art au Travail*, a history of the Canada Council Art Bank published this year. The jury described his contributions as "remarkable and with purpose," and noted his efforts in paving the way for young artists. David Silcox lives in Toronto.

Selection of winners

To be nominated for one of the artistic awards, candidates must have created an outstanding body of work and have made a significant contribution to the development of the visual or media arts over a significant period of time. Nominees for the Saidye Bronfman Award must have made a substantial contribution to the development of crafts in Canada over a significant period of time.

The winners of the Governor General's Awards in Visual and Media Arts were chosen by independent peer juries of visual and media artists and arts professionals from across Canada. The jury for the six artistic achievement awards and the outstanding contribution award consisted of painter Chris Cran (Calgary), installation artist Lani Maestro (Halifax and Lignières Orgères, France), textile artist Ann Newdigate (Hornby Island, BC.), visual artist Marianne Nicolson (Victoria.), multidisciplinary artist Rober Racine (Montreal), and film/video artist Ross Turnbull (Toronto). The jury for the Saidye Bronfman Award consisted of Chris Cran and Ann Newdigate, as well as glass artist Jean-Marie Giguère (Montreal) and ceramist Jim Smith (Chester, NS).

Exhibition at the National Gallery of Canada

The National Gallery of Canada will present an exhibition in celebration of the winners and their works. Media representatives are invited to attend the official opening on **Thursday, March 22**, from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. in the Great Hall of the National Gallery, 380 Sussex Drive, Ottawa.

Media wishing to preview the exhibition and interview the winners may do so on **Thursday, March 22 at 10 a.m.** Please contact Genevieve Georget-Smyth at 613-990-1936 to R.S.V.P. for this media preview.

Work by Saidye Bronfman Award-winner Paul Mathieu can also be seen in the Canadian Museum of Civilization's exhibition *UNIQUE: 30 Years of Outstanding Crafts*, which runs until August 5, 2007.

Special recognition

The Speaker of the House of Commons, the Honourable Peter Milliken, will recognize the laureates in the House of Commons on **Thursday, March 22**, immediately following Question Period.

Awards ceremony

Her Excellency the Right Honourable Michaëlle Jean, Governor General of Canada, will present the 2007 awards on **Friday, March 23** at 5:30 p.m. in the Ballroom of Rideau Hall (the residence of the Governor General in Ottawa), One Sussex Drive. A reception and dinner in honour of the winners will be held that evening *(by invitation only)*.

Media wishing to cover the ceremony should contact Marilyne Guèvremont at the Rideau Hall Press Office at 613-998-7280.

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To arrange interviews with the winners:
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Important Notices